WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUTH?

THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CHANGE ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Prepared for Health Canada by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Division, September 1998

The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Health Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1998, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Division, obtained funding from Health Canada to investigate how the lives of young people in Newfoundland and Labrador have been affected by economic downturns and the crisis in the fishery. This research was prompted by the recognition that many youth in this predominantly rural province are dealing with a social environment of uncertainty and hopelessness brought about by economic change. They are witnessing population decline in their communities, high unemployment and rising costs for post-secondary education. Many of them face the prospect of leaving the province in order to establish a secure future.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has been concerned that existing social and institutional supports are not adequate to meet the needs of youth. In order to respond effectively, organizations such as the CMHA needed a better understanding of youth issues. This could be done through an overview of current assessments and initiatives related to youth, and a process for hearing from young people around the province. The first phase of this research was to compile information from studies relevant to youth, and to examine some current initiatives that are proving effective. In the second phase, focus groups were held around the province, organized and facilitated by young people, to record the views of young people on issues affecting them and what they feel should be done.

The research follows the determinants of health framework adopted by Health Canada, which is a holistic approach to understanding the factors that affect physical and mental health. These factors include income, employment, education, social environment, support networks, gender, personal health practices and the availability of services. Although the focus is on rural areas, many of the issues discussed in this report are relevant to urban areas and to parts of the province unaffected by the moratorium. Section 1 presents information from the literature review, along with a description of selected youth initiatives. Section 2 summarizes the issues that came out of the focus groups. Section 3 offers some overall conclusions, along with some recommendations for supporting the mental health of young people in the province in this period of change.

1.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND YOUTH INITIATIVES

The information presented in this section comes from statistical reports, surveys, needs assessments, youth forum reports and other published and unpublished materials, supplemented with evidence from key informants. The first part of this section consists of information from the literature review and consultations. The second part describes some of the youth-related initiatives occurring around the province.

Research was limited by time and funding constraints, and the discussion of issues is therefore not exhaustive. Research findings and statistics came from a variety of sources based on different methodologies, making some of them hard to reconcile. Some information was difficult or impossible to obtain, pointing to the need for research on youth to be made more accessible and for more research to be done.

1.1 Economic Conditions

Low Incomes

Recent reports on poverty in Canada and the Atlantic Region indicate a prevalence of low family incomes and a high rate of child poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador.[1] In 1996, 41.6 percent of children under twelve in the province lived in households with incomes lower than $30,000 per year, compared to only 30.8 percent in New Brunswick, 35.2 percent in P.E.I. and 25.7 percent for Canada as a whole (Simpson and Wood Catano 1998a:24). The province's minimum wage is $5.25, one of the lowest in the country. The family poverty rate in 1996 was 16.6 percent, second only to Quebec and higher than the national average of 14.8 percent (National Council of Welfare 1998a:21).[2]

Between 1990 and 1995, the child poverty rate[3] in Newfoundland and Labrador increased by 6.4 percent, which was twice the national increase during the same period. The 1995 rate of 26.0 percent was the highest in the country. It declined in 1996 to 20.0 percent, which was comparable to the national average. However, the 1996 poverty rate for children in families headed by single mothers was still the highest in the country at 72.1 percent (compared to a national rate of 65.3 percent). In 1996, 27,000 children in the province were living below the poverty line, and tens of thousands of others were close to it (National Council of Welfare

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1 Early in 1998, the Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic (CHPNA) released a statistical report on child poverty in Atlantic Canada based on reports by the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Council on Social Development and Human Resources Development Canada/Statistics Canada. Most of the statistics in these reports come from Statistics Canada (Simpson and Wood Catano 1998a, 1998b). In the spring of 1998, the National Council of Welfare published reports on poverty, welfare and unemployment based on data from the 1996 census (1998a,b).

2 The family poverty rate is based on the number of families that are at or below the poverty line. Most of the studies cited in this report use Statistics Canada low-income cut-offs to define the poverty line for families. The low-income cut-off is the level at which a family spends 20 percent more of its gross income on food, shelter and clothing than is spent by the average family. The average Canadian family spends 34.7 to 36.2 percent of its gross income on these necessities. The variation in percentages results from the use of different base years. Families that spend 20 percent more than this on necessities are considered low-income. The low-income cut-offs vary with family size and population of the area of residence. In 1996, the low-income cut-off (1986 base year) for a family of four in cities of more than 500,000 was $31,862. In cities of less than 30,000 it was $24,922, and in rural areas it was $21,690 (National Council of Welfare 1998a:5).

3 The child poverty rate is based on the number of children living in poverty in all family types.

1998a:77; Simpson and Wood Catano 1998a:11).[4]

Estimated welfare income (including federal child benefits and tax credits) for a couple with two children in 1996 was $14,834, one of the lowest rates in the country. For a single parent with one child, it was $12,989, which is comparable to the rate in most of the provinces (National Council of Welfare 1997/98:14-16). Welfare rolls doubled in this province in the 1990s, as they did in other parts of the country. There were more than 36,000 welfare cases in 1997, representing about 73,000 people in a population of half a million (National Council of Welfare 1998b:18,65). The numbers have declined in 1998 due to stricter enforcement, outmigration and an increase in employment. The number of people on welfare would have been higher during this period without federal programs to assist people laid off from the fishery.

Some recent statistics suggest that poverty is more chronic here than elsewhere due to high unemployment. The 1996 census recorded only three percent of welfare recipients in the province with additional income from wages, compared to 14 percent nationally. In the last two decades, 76 percent of recipients stayed on welfare for longer than two years, which was the highest percentage in the country and well above the national average of 54 percent (National Council of Welfare 1998b:29,51).

A higher proportion of youth in the province have been on welfare than is the case nationally. The provincial Social Policy Advisory Committee noted that 24 percent of youth (18-24) received social assistance at some point during 1995, and that youth represented 53 percent of new cases that year (Social Policy 1997b:10). In 1997, 22 percent of welfare cases were people aged 18-24, compared to 16 percent in Canada as a whole (National Council of Welfare 1998b:36). A policy change in 1997 now denies welfare to youth 18 and over living at home. The estimated welfare income for a single employable person in 1996 was $2,701, well below the rates in other provinces (National Council of Welfare 1997/98:14-16).

Some of the reports cited above emphasize the relationship between poverty and poor health, lower education and literacy levels, unsafe housing and high-risk behaviours. A recent report on special education in Newfoundland and Labrador summarizes the problem of poverty for children:

> Hunger, inadequate nutrition, poorer health, poor housing, higher levels of stress and lower expectations for the future are all factors connected to both poverty and lower educational achievement.
>
> (Canning 1996:40)

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4 Poverty rates are higher among the province's Aboriginal families. In 1991, 53.9 percent of adult Aboriginal people in the province had incomes of less than $10,000, compared to a rate of 6.1 percent for the province as a whole. Children under 15 make up a larger percentage of the Aboriginal population than Canadian children as a whole and have more health problems than other Canadian children (Simpson and Wood Catano 1998a:18,28-30).

According to the nation-wide Health Promotion Survey in 1990, 60.2 percent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians felt that a more secure income would improve their health and well-being, compared to 44.6 percent of Canadians (Neville and Edwards 1993). A recent provincial government health status report expressed concern that worsening economic conditions are putting people "under increasing pressure of income insecurity" (Neville et al 1994:80). The authors noted that high unemployment combined with low incomes and low education levels are threats to health in rural areas:

> Taken together these data suggest an oppressive economic environment with stress arising from living with poverty and the lack of social recognition/outlets acquired from working. These stresses have a detrimental impact on individuals and families and limit their options to improve and maintain health.
>
> (Neville et al 1994:39)

The report recommended that health strategies be linked to a program of "economic rejuvenation" in rural areas (Neville et al 1994:89).

More than 27,000 people in the province were eligible for support payments from fishery adjustment programs which began in the 1990s. While the payments are low, they have brought some security to many families accustomed to the yearly fluctuations in income characteristic of the inshore fishery. They have given many parents a regular income to spend on school supplies, clothing, food and other immediate family needs, but not enough to invest in expensive gear and vessels for new fisheries, or in post-secondary education for their children (Reid 1995:80-83; CMHA/NF 1994; Genge 1996:140-142).

As in other parts of the country, a gradual divergence of incomes is visible in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Some harvesters and processors have had the capital to invest in lucrative new species such as crab, and they are part of a thriving class of entrepreneurs, professionals and salaried workers in rural areas. At the other extreme are those getting by with meagre incomes from some combination of fishing, wage work, small enterprise and government assistance.

Unemployment

The groundfish closures in Atlantic Canada in the early 1990s affected 50,000 people directly employed in the industry and some 47,000 others working in related businesses. More than 27,000 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador were eligible for income support under The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), most of whom lived in rural areas. TAGS is being replaced by a short-term program in 1998, and the current estimate is that about 14,000 people will be without other means of support at the end of this final program. People have also been regularly dropped from the program since it began. Moreover, even the minimum security of TAGS was not available to fishery workers who did not qualify and to others who were indirectly

dependent on the fishery.

Although the fishery is diversifying, it will not be a mainstay for the same number of harvesters and plant workers previously involved in groundfish. The labour force in many rural communities has also been affected by boom-and-bust cycles in mining and offshore oil, along with declining employment in forestry and reductions in government and service sector jobs. The official unemployment rate in early 1998 was 16.8 percent, about twice the national rate. Unemployment is much higher in most rural communities.

The official unemployment rate for youth in early 1998 was 27.1 percent, which was about twice the national rate. The moratorium affected some young people who had worked for several years in the fishery, most of whom would not have been eligible for benefits.

> In every community, we were told of young people who had left school early to fish and were now left with an inadequate education, no income support and no means of making a living.
>
> (CHMA/NF 1994:38)

Opportunities for young people to find casual work and summer jobs have also declined. There is less demand for babysitters, crew members, casual plant workers, clerks and labourers. More adults are competing for the jobs that exist (CMHA N&L 1994:22).

Van Hook (1990) described how adolescents in American farm communities participated in the family enterprise. In the same way, the fishing household in Newfoundland and Labrador has been the centre of an enterprise in which rural youth played a part from an early age. A high value was placed on young people going to work full-time in the fishery. Those who continued their education were expected to work with the family or in fish plants in the summer. Employment was a way of establishing a separate identity, and young people could look to their parents and other adults as role models of the kind of work they would be doing. The loss of this opportunity has a social and personal dimension as well as an economic one.

In a pre-moratorium study of people aged 16-29 on the Northern Peninsula (O'Grady 1993), 77 percent of the respondents said they would rather work full-time for minimum wage than collect the same amount of money from unemployment insurance. Fifty percent had quit school; 75 percent of those who had quit felt that it was a mistake, and 68 percent of them were planning to upgrade. Although the youth unemployment rate ranged from 40 to 80 percent in these communities at the time, many youth worked in the informal economy. For boys, it was fishing, hunting and auto repair; for girls, it was mainly babysitting (O'Grady 1993:73-94).

Newfoundland and Labrador youth are somewhat pessimistic about their job prospects in the 1990s, much as they are in other parts of Canada. This is true even of those intending to move to urban areas for education and employment (Genge 1996; Reid 1995; Sharpe and Spain 1993).

Programs for youth employment, enterprise and career development are located around the province, supported by federal and provincial agencies in partnership with school boards, businesses and community organizations.[5] The Community Services Council in St. John's recently compiled an inventory of these programs and stated publicly that a lack of co-ordination among the sponsoring agencies is leading to duplication in some areas and under-servicing in others. Another problem with these programs is their short-term nature. The Council has proposed the creation of a youth institute to help young people find employment through information and co-ordination services. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has announced a controversial plan to stop funding co-operative education and youth internship programs in the high schools and to re-direct the money to unemployed youth who are out of school. HRDC is also working with the provincial Department of Human Resources and Employment (HRE) to develop a new Youth Employment Strategy.

Outmigration

The province's population (563,600 in 1997) has been declining steeply since 1993, due partly to a low birth rate but mainly to outmigration. Interprovincial net migration rose from -711 in 1990/91 to -9,285 in 1996/97 (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a:4-8). Whole families are part of this new wave of outmigration. Population loss is having the greatest impact in rural areas, where a loss of one-fifth to one-third of residents in a community is not uncommon. Erosion of local tax bases, and reductions in provincial and federal government services, are creating hardships for those who remain.

People under 30 make up the largest proportion of outmigrants. In 1996/97, 66.6 percent of outmigrants were in the 15-29 age group (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a:7). Most of the outmigrants are educated. In recent decades, almost 80 percent of the youth leaving the province had a high school diploma, and about half had also graduated from a post-secondary institution (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:4).

At a provincial youth forum held in Grand Falls-Windsor in March, 1998, outmigration was a major issue of concern. Some of the participants expressed a widely-held view that educated youth are leaving and those with no post-secondary training are being left behind. Some of those planning to leave said they were doing so reluctantly and would return if they could start a business or find a job.

A 1994 survey of 400 households on the Bonavista Peninsula, an area dependent on the fishery, found that 75 percent of people under 25 expected to leave within five years, compared with 35 percent of people aged 30-39. Close to half of the people with some post-secondary

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5 They include: the Youth Ventures Program to encourage youth business start-ups and sponsored by Community Futures Development Corporations, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal; the Youth Awareness Program (HRDC, schools, businesses etc.) to increase youth employment opportunities; and Linkages (Human Resources and Employment).

education expected to leave. The main reason for leaving was to find work, not because they disliked the area (Sinclair 1997:12). In a study of 55 families displaced by the fishery in the same region (Canning and Strong 1997), 98 percent of the parents expected their children to leave the area, and 85 percent of the adolescents expected to go, although many liked their communities and wanted to stay. More than half of the parents themselves expected to leave but were pessimistic about job prospects elsewhere. A survey of 240 high school students on the Northern Peninsula found that while over three-fourths would rather work near home, almost all were prepared to relocate to find jobs (Genge 1996:137).

1.2 Education

Literacy and Education Levels

A smaller percentage of the general population has completed high school compared to Canada as a whole. However, most of this is due to low education levels of people 50 and older (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a:30). The level of schooling of 15-24 year-olds has risen dramatically since the early 1970s. Post-secondary participation rates (colleges and universities) have about doubled and are now comparable to national rates (Newfoundland and Labrador 1995:63-70;1998a:71-73). An increasing proportion of the parent-age population has completed high school or post-secondary education, and many laid-off fishery workers have taken Adult Basic Education courses (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:5).

In 1990, 61 percent of people aged 16-69 could not read or write well enough to complete everyday tasks, compared to 38 percent nationally and 43 percent in Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998b). This percentage has probably decreased since then, but literacy remains a serious issue, and the government has set up a strategic planning team to deal with it. At the provincial youth forum mentioned earlier, participants considered literacy to be a major problem in school. They noted cases of students who did not understand what they were reading in class.

It has been estimated that up to half the school-aged population of about 110,000 students could be at risk of low achievement due to low income (Canning 1996:37). Current student performance on national basic skills tests, although rising, remains slightly below the national average in most subjects despite significant improvements in the education system in recent decades (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:11-24).

Secondary Education

The student population has declined by one-third since the early 1970s and is still declining about three percent annually. There were 472 public schools in 1995, but this number is being reduced by restructuring after the elimination of the denominational system. Most

schools are in rural areas, and many have inadequate resources in terms of programs, equipment, teachers and other staff (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:2; Social Policy 1997a:51). The provincial youth forum (cited above) raised the issue of quality of education in rural high schools. Students reported that declining enrolments have led to teacher lay-offs, course reductions and teachers delivering courses outside their subject area. They also talked about the increase in distance education courses in rural high schools, which they considered valuable additions only when supported with enough instructors.

The percentage of people with secondary school graduation has risen since the 1970s and is now comparable to the national average. Much of this increase has occurred because there is less work available as an alternative, but various "stay-in-school" programs have also had an influence. However, about 2,000 students drop out of high school every year. About half of those taking the General Education Diploma (GED) examination every year are under 25, which is higher than the Canadian average (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:26-28). High school upgrading is available in the colleges and through some subsidized programs in the community.

The 1992 Royal Commission on Education reported that there was not enough remedial help in the schools for students who were doing poorly but deciding to stay in school (Newfoundland and Labrador 1992:341-343). A recent report on special education noted that the problem persists and that the Department of Education should provide an allocation for remedial teachers in the schools:

> Children who need remedial or extra help to perform at or near grade level now have to get this help from already overburdened classroom teachers or more often from special education teachers who are neither allocated nor trained for this purpose. Children who feel inadequate in school often become behaviour problems adding to the demands placed on regular and special education.
>
> (Canning 1996:40)

There are few alternative schools for students having problems in the regular school system. Some schools have peer tutoring or homework assistance programs, but resources for these are limited. The work of co-ordinating services for at-risk students falls to guidance counsellors, who must meet the needs of all students, and who may teach classes as well. The provincial counsellor-to-student ratio is 1:1,000, which is lower than in many other provinces. Rural counsellors serve widely dispersed schools and have difficulty visiting each one on a weekly basis (Canning 1996:236-240; Newfoundland House of Assembly 1996:107).

Guidance counsellors in some areas have found that more of the mainstream students need immediate help with academic or career issues, due to anxiety and stress related to the moratorium. They say that much of their work involves keeping students motivated to get through school.

Counsellors expressed particular concern over the extreme need in the areas of

> psychological services, motivation and career awareness in light of the high percentages of unemployed people and the lack of role models in so many of our communities today....
>
> (Canning 1996:239)

The education system in the last decade has introduced more career and life skills programs, and there was federal funding in the late 1980s and early 1990s to help students at risk of dropping out. Guidance counsellors say they would like to implement more programs in study skills, dropout prevention, motivation and career awareness for all students, but they do not have the time. Not all school boards have the resources for extra programming. Some have organized career fairs and other events but have no money for follow-up programs (Canning 1996:236; Reid 1995:85-87; Social Policy 1997a:47-48; personal communication with guidance counsellors). About six years ago, HRDC began funding school boards to introduce co-operative education and internship programs giving students work experience with community employers. Counsellors have sometimes placed at-risk students in these work programs as well. The recent HRDC decision to stop funding co-operative education is forcing school boards to cut back on the programs.

Students are saying that the links between school and career need to be strengthened so they can start on a career path earlier. They want better access to information, more hands-on career exploration, more co-op education programs and greater input from local businesses. This was emphasized in recent consultations held by the Community Services Council in St. John's, and at youth forums in the past few years. For example, at a school district youth forum in 1995, in an eastern Newfoundland area heavily affected by the moratorium, students spoke of not getting enough time with guidance counsellors for career exploration. In some cases, this was because counsellors were too busy teaching courses. They made a strong plea for more career initiatives to help them re-direct their lives in the face of unemployment and pessimism in their communities. In response to this forum, the school board freed up some counsellors and made career and motivational programming a high priority (See Section 1.6).

Post-Secondary Education

The post-secondary participation rate in Newfoundland is approaching the Canadian average. In a pre-moratorium study of high school graduates (Sharpe and Spain 1993; Sharpe and White 1993), 48 percent went on to a post-secondary institution in the same year, and another 14.8 percent were enrolled by the end of 18 months. By 1995 and 1996, government surveys were finding that two-thirds of high school graduates were attending within a year after graduation (Newfoundland and Labrador 1995;1998a:67).

Some of the increase is due to programs in the late 1980s and early 1990s that helped youth in the transition from high school. Much of it is due to a lack of employment alternatives (Newfoundland and Labrador 1995:3-31;1998a:69). There is evidence that many students who

would have preferred to go straight to a job are enrolling in college or university (Genge 1996:148). However, students are also placing a higher value on post-secondary education and careers outside the fishery, which is consistent with trends in other rural areas going through economic changes (CMHA/NF 1994; Reid 1995:76). In the study of Bonavista Peninsula families cited earlier (Canning and Strong 1997), 64 percent of the parents said in 1994 that they wanted a post-secondary education for their children. By 1997, this had risen to 83 percent. About 90 percent of the adolescents planned a post-secondary education and a career outside the fishery.

Students are facing barriers of cost, accessibility and academic performance. The university's admission standards have risen sharply in the last five years. Many students have faced waiting lists for public college courses, and some felt they were being displaced by unemployed fishery workers being trained by HRDC (CMHA/NF 1994; Reid 1995:79). The backlog is also due to cuts in funding to the public college system, which led to the elimination of courses and campuses. Students have turned to the higher-priced private colleges to get courses. Tuition costs have risen in all of the post-secondary institutions, and tuition load (percentage of personal income) is one of the highest in the country (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a:102). Students and their families have indicated that tuition fees are a problem (CHMA 1994; Social Policy 1997a:50-51). This was a major topic at both youth forums cited earlier.

In the pre-moratorium study of graduates cited above, rural youth were more likely to be in a college program than in university, and the group that was not attending an institution after 18 months was 55.9 percent male and 68.7 percent rural. The reasons given for not enrolling included low high school marks, waiting for a course, undecided about a course, not having tuition fees or wanting to support themselves. Most of them had found work during the year. Only half of their fathers worked full-time compared to 70 percent of the fathers of those who had gone to college or university. Only one-fourth of them expected substantial financial help from their parents for post-secondary education, whereas almost half of those already enrolled expected substantial help (Sharpe and White 1993:1-5; Sharpe and Spain 1993:41-169).

In the 1996 government survey (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a), 13.4 percent of those not attending college or university were back in school upgrading their marks; 14.3 percent were not interested; 25.1 percent had found work; others were undecided or waiting for programs. There were 18.7 percent who cited cost as a barrier, up from 16.5 percent in 1995 (p.67-68). Around the same time, a survey of 240 students on the Northern Peninsula (Genge 1996) found that while 90 percent expected to have some post-secondary education in the next five years, only 65 percent planned to attend that year. The most important reason given for delaying was lack of funds, followed by problems selecting a program, desire to become self-supporting and lack of confidence in their academic abilities.

1.3 Social Environment

Family and Community

Many studies of the impact of economic crisis on families show that adolescents are significantly affected. In rural societies, individual identity is firmly situated in the family and its place in the community. Loss of livelihood, uncertainty about the future and changes in traditional provider roles within the family can lead to increased tensions, inconsistent parenting and parental withdrawal (Reid 1995:78-95; Van Hook 1990:72-74).

Rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador historically have had strong support systems in family, church and community. Researchers have often referred to these to explain the low levels of stress reported here compared to the Canadian population as a whole (Elgar 1995:47). A survey of rural and urban high school students in 1990 found that most of the teens placed a high value on parental influence in their lives, and most reported a happy home life despite arguments with parents (Bennett and Westera 1994; Westera and Bennett 1994). However, the cod moratorium has put a strain on some families. School and health care professionals, and community residents in general, report that adults affected by the moratorium have experienced social isolation, loss of purpose, depression and anxiety about the future. Parents who have been affected have described increased family tensions, and attempts to hide their problems from their children. However, many parents and children say that their families have drawn closer together (CMHA/NF 1994; Reid 1995; briefs to Newfoundland House of Assembly Select Committee on Children's Interests 1996).

The school board youth forum in eastern Newfoundland was preceded by small group consultations with families affected by the moratorium. Parents described feelings of frustration, boredom, hopelessness and anxiety about the future. They felt guilty because they could not provide for their children's immediate needs or their education. The youth talked about how they asked for fewer material things and felt guilty because their parents were sacrificing for them. Some were frustrated because they could not get their families to talk about their problems. They saw their communities dying and heard parents telling them to move away even though many wanted to stay.

Some guidance counsellors say that more junior and senior high school students are requesting help as a result of loss of emotional support and guidance from parents. However, they suggest a variety of reasons for this lack of support: some parents are dealing with unemployment-related stressors, while others are too busy working to spend time with their children. One problem identified by these counsellors is the lack of opportunities for parents to get involved in school activities in the higher grades (personal communication with guidance counsellors).

As noted earlier, changes in the economy are increasing the social differentiation in rural communities. Some are prospering in the fishery, while others are barely scraping by. Some people lost their jobs but were not eligible for TAGS. There are growing social divisions between high-income and low-income families, and between those with compensation and those

without. Some children have experienced resentment and discrimination because their parents were on "the package" (CMHA/NF 1994:40).

In 1995, a survey of stress and other health indicators was done on the Bonavista Peninsula (Gien and Solberg 1997; Solberg 1997), and one part of the survey looked at how people felt about their communities. The research drew on the "healthy communities" literature, which identifies characteristics such as community solidarity, safe and sustainable environments, active economies, high levels of participation, good services and healthy residents. By contrast, people in communities experiencing economic downturn might be expected to feel alienation, distrust of institutions and lack of faith in community resources, and there might be more health or behavioural problems. Most of the residents in the survey were satisfied with their communities, although they identified social problems which they felt had become worse since the moratorium, such as boredom, stress, anxiety, uncertainty and substance abuse. Population loss and increased community tensions were related to the moratorium, and people were uncertain about the future of their communities. They had little confidence in institutions other than education and health care (Solberg 1997:4).

The study of families on the Bonavista Peninsula (Canning and Strong 1997) looked at the moratorium in relation to family and community impacts. Although parents showed signs of stress, scores on the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) indicated that families were functioning cohesively and adapting well to new circumstances. The parents felt strongly attached to their relatives, friends and communities, and more than half of them were involved in volunteer activities. The adolescents were happy with life in the area, reporting that family and friends were supportive. This group of families did not show the high levels of distress, social anxiety and weakened social support described in some of the literature on unemployment and families. The researchers suggested that strong social networks and income support from TAGS were helping families and communities cope in the short term. They warned that adverse effects might increase with the end of TAGS and the continued outmigration of youth.

School Environment

The Royal Commission on Education noted in 1992 that significant changes in society had put pressure on schools to deal with students' social and financial problems as well as their academic needs. The report cited factors such as poverty, parents spending less time with children, family disintegration and low literacy levels of parents. More students were coming to school with low self-esteem or emotional and behavioural problems (Newfoundland and Labrador 1992:333-364). A study of 212 rural Grade Seven to Nine students (Klas and Wellman 1993) found that managing school work and dealing with issues of self-esteem and identity were the greatest stressors they faced. The authors suggested that schools help students develop time management and coping skills.

In recent Department of Education surveys, over half of junior and senior high school students answered positively to questions about school as a place they wanted to be, where they learned to get along with others and where they felt safe. Most felt they could handle their work, and that their teachers were helpful and fair, but they were less enthusiastic about the curriculum. These positive attitudes were stronger among rural students. However, a significant minority of urban and rural students felt that their schools were unsafe, and that students hurt or harassed each other (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:35-39).

As a result of increased violence and disruption in schools, procedures have been introduced for safe school teams, staff training and more parental involvement. School boards have set up anti-bullying and violence awareness programs (See Section 2). There have been calls for more guidance counsellors and the placement of social workers in schools (Newfoundland and Labrador 1996:90, 104-105; Social Policy 1997a,b). The Royal Commission on Education recommended interdisciplinary teams of school staff, social workers, health professionals and others (Newfoundland and Labrador 1992:347). Informal teams have been operating in some areas. The provincial government's new integrated service model for education, health, welfare and justice agencies is designed partly to deal with these problems (See Section 1.5).

Recreation and Social Relationships

Bennett and Westera (1994), reporting on their 1990 survey of high school students, emphasized the importance of relationships for this age group, and their need for supportive settings. Many of the adolescents in the survey felt that adults in their communities lacked confidence in them and did not understand their needs, particularly for adequate opportunities for recreation and socializing.

Young people have described their communities as "boring", with "nothing to do," and "no place to hang out" (Boys and Girls Club 1994; Seyfrit 1993:37-43). Many of the briefs to the Newfoundland House of Assembly's Select Committee on Children's Interests noted the lack of recreation and after-school activities in rural communities. Teens have repeatedly stated in forums and studies that increased drug and alcohol use is related to a lack of alternatives. Klas and Wellman (1993), in their study of younger rural adolescents, found that while there was a high level of participation in unorganized sports, not many students were involved in organized sports, which tended to be restricted to the best athletes. Many of the surveys, consultations and youth forums around the province have called for more low-cost, accessible recreation and organized sports, to be set up by community groups, councils and schools. A 1994 provincial health status report (Neville et al) included non-competitive, organized physical activities as part of health promotion strategies for youth (p. 86). The authors of the 1990 survey cited above (Westera and Bennett 1994) recommended a direct role for youth in developing recreation programs and other community activities (pp. 528-529).

Since the early 1990s, the provincial government has been cutting funding to youth-serving organizations, including the Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brothers/Big Sisters which provide programs for at-risk youth. A provincial Youth Advisory Council was also disbanded in the early 1990s. In a brief to government in 1994, the Boys and Girls Clubs stated that funding cuts were reducing the number of youth organizations and creating "a precarious future for young people at a time when economic, social and cultural upheavals make community support absolutely essential" (Boys and Girls Clubs 1994).

Gender

School achievement and graduation rates are consistently lower for males than for females, and males are more likely to take an extra year to finish high school. Male ratings of the quality of school life are lower (Newfoundland and Labrador 1997:12-13, 25). In 1996, there was a higher percentage of young women than young men with some post-secondary education (Newfoundland and Labrador 1998a:33). In the 1989/90 study of high school graduates cited earlier (Sharpe and White 1993), a high proportion of those who did not go on immediately to college or university were males from rural areas. A recent study of high school students on the Northern Peninsula (Genge 1996) indicated that more males than females were having problems getting their careers on track.

In a recent provincial survey of student drug use, males reported greater alcohol use than females, but there is evidence that the gender gap is decreasing. Slightly more females than males reported having smoked, which is a reversal of the previous pattern (Spurrell 1996:6-9). Other studies of high school students in the province have found that females visit guidance counsellors more often than males and are more likely to report stress, depressive symptoms and conflict situations with friends and family. This gender difference has been found in similar studies here and elsewhere, and it has often been linked to a greater willingness of females to ask for help (Elgar 1995:50;, Klas and Wellman 1993). Gender differences in school performance, alcohol and drug use and self-reported emotional problems also suggest differences in the way that males and females deal with stress.

Gender differences in attitudes and expectations remain significant. Recent research indicates that teenage girls are still more hesitant than boys to obtain birth control devices, or to talk about having them, for fear of being stigmatized (personal communication with Department of Health and Community Services officials). A survey of 1,045 high school students around the province (Morrison et al 1997) found that adolescent males were more likely than females to have negative attitudes about homosexuality, and erroneous beliefs about sexual coercion. These were linked to the pressure on males to conform to traditional masculine roles. The researchers suggested that educational programs address the tendency for adolescent females to become "silenced." The Royal Commission on Education noted that, despite official policy, gender stereotyping remained a problem in schools, and it called for the removal of gender bias in the curriculum and in career counselling (1992:344-45). Gender stereotyping and harassment are

now included in violence prevention programs in schools.

1.4 Personal Health Practices

Mental Health, Stress and Coping Strategies

The self-rated health status of people in Newfoundland and Labrador has been the highest in the country. Over two-thirds of people rated their health as very good or excellent in a 1994/95 Statistics Canada health survey (NLCHI 1997:16). Self-reported stress levels of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been lower than the national average. The 1990 Health Promotion Survey showed that only 8.5 percent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rated their lives very stressful compared to 12.3 percent of Canadians as a whole (Neville et al 1994:67) The rate of people reporting a major depressive episode in the previous year is also one of the lowest in the country. More low-income people than high-income people report these incidents (NLCHI 1997:20).

Youth in the 1990 Health Promotion Survey also had low stress levels in this province relative to other parts of Canada. Among 15-24 year-olds, 39.5 percent considered their lives somewhat stressful, and 55.8 percent said their lives were not very, or not at all, stressful (Neville et al 1994:68). However, adolescents have the same rate of clinical depression as elsewhere, about 10 percent (Elgar 1995). Suicide rates in the 1980s were lower than the Canadian average, even when under-reporting is taken into account. The rates were higher in Labrador for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals (Aldridge and St. John 1991).

A survey of 216 rural adolescents in the early 1990s (Elgar 1995) found that they scored relatively low on the Children's Depression Inventory, indicating few symptoms of depression, which the author attributed to strong social support in rural communities. However, their scores on the Checklist of Adolescent Problem Situations were higher than those of a group of urban adolescents in the U.S. This index measures frequency and intensity of feelings of inadequacy in social problem situations (Elgar 1995:47-48).

A pre-moratorium study on the Northern Peninsula (O'Grady 1993) looked at the psychological characteristics of a group of unemployed 16-29 year-olds, in an area where youth unemployment was 40 to 80 percent. Depressive symptoms were lower than had been expected based on other studies of unemployed populations. Two-thirds of them reported symptoms such as "the blues," loneliness or restless sleep at least "sometimes" or more often. The percentages were lower for males, and among the older half of the sample. The researcher suggested that youth participation in the informal economy might have counterracted some of the negative psychological impacts of unemployment (pp. 168-171).

Research in Canada and the U.S. has found that massive lay-offs in a region can affect the mental health of adolescents. Young people are at risk for low self-esteem, depression, social

isolation, low academic achievement, behaviour problems and substance abuse (Hutchens and Heffernan 1993; Reid 1995:78-82; Van Hook 1990). Some studies of the American farm crisis found adolescents reporting more stress, worry, depression, loneliness and guilt feelings. However, not all of these studies found significant levels of such problems. Many also noted that adolescents had good social supports in family and friends, and they had effective ways of dealing with stress. Different adolescents reacted differently to the crisis. For example, some felt more pressure to achieve in school, while others showed lower school performance. There was a tendency to hide emotional problems from outsiders (Van Hook 1990:73-78).

There have been few surveys of moratorium-related stress. The Bonavista Peninsula stress survey (Gien and Solberg 1997) found that most respondents had medium to high levels of distress on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), but their self-reported stress tended to be lower than this. People who said they felt stressed by the moratorium also showed higher distress levels on the GHQ. Those who had been laid off were more likely to say that the moratorium was affecting their health and stress levels, and causing family tensions. The highest indicator of distress on the GHQ was in social dysfunction, such as feelings of boredom, not knowing what to do with one's time and not enjoying everyday tasks. The study of moratorium-affected families in the same area (Canning and Strong 1977) found parents reporting higher than average stress levels. However, the adolescents and younger children were within the normal range for indicators such as social anxiety and depression.

A survey in Western Newfoundland found high levels of distress among teenagers. The Community Mental Health Initiative conducted surveys and interviews with over 800 students in six high schools in 1994-95. They found that 30 percent of youth experienced good mental health only "sometimes," or even less often. This was a larger percentage than was found in similar studies in Ontario and the U.S. Stress came out in the form of "the blues," drug and alcohol use and problems in school. The students expressed the need for counsellors, groups or hotlines to talk about their problems (CMHI 1995).

Most of the evidence of the emotional impacts of the moratorium comes from the accounts of counsellors and mental health professionals, and reports of meetings and interviews where adults and youth have talked about the situation in their communities (CMHA/NF 1994; Educational Planning 1994; Women's Committee FFAW 1994). At the school board forum in eastern Newfoundland, students said they felt guilty about their parents' sacrifices and uncertain about their own futures. They spoke of conflicts in some families, and of people turning to alcohol. Mental health professionals in various regions have seen an increase in stress and depressive symptoms in moratorium-affected areas. School guidance counsellors have had more visits from students because of family and personal stress, depression and low self-esteem. Some have attributed this to loss of emotional support from parents, concern about parents' problems and feelings of anxiety about the future. Although they have seen more aggression, substance abuse and other behavioural problems, they have also noticed some students reacting by working harder in school and at home (Reid 1995:78-90; personal communication with guidance counsellors and mental health professionals).

Alcohol and Drug Use

In 1996, the Department of Health *Student Drug Use Survey* questioned 3,699 junior and senior high students about their alcohol and drug use in the previous 12 months.[6] Fifty-six percent reported having used alcohol in the previous month, and about one-third reported drinking heavily at least once in that period. The incidence of use increased with age. The percentages are slightly higher than in the rest of Atlantic Canada and slightly lower than in Ontario. One-third of the students had been passengers with drivers who had been drinking, and this was the most significant personal alcohol-related problem they reported (Spurrell 1996:6-8). Nearly 24 percent had tried cannabis, slightly more than in Ontario but fewer than in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. About ten percent or fewer had tried other drugs, which is comparable to the other Atlantic provinces (Spurrell 1996:11-14).

The study found that 36.7 percent of students reported having smoked more than one cigarette in the previous year. The rate is higher than in the other Atlantic provinces and Ontario, but lower than in B.C. As with alcohol, the incidence of use was higher in the older age groups. The reasons given for trying cigarettes were primarily curiosity and the fact that friends were trying them, but 40.6 percent of current smokers had also started smoking to relieve stress, compared to only 16.5 percent of experimental smokers. Among the current smokers, 27.7 said they found it too hard to quit (Spurrell 1996:8-11).

The literature on rural economic crises links adolescent substance abuse with family stress, parental withdrawal, parental drinking and adolescent feelings of depression and hopelessness (Van Hook 1990). Guidance counsellors in rural areas of this province have found these connections in some cases (Reid 1995:79-80; personal communication with guidance counsellors). The link between parental problems and teenage substance abuse has been discussed in youth forums as well.

The *Student Drug Use Survey* concluded that substance use is too high, and it called for a review of prevention programs, more emphasis on harm reduction, more support for students trying to quit and better education about the dangers of experimenting with highly addictive substances like tobacco (Spurrell 1996:17-21). The 1994 provincial health status report recommended more stop-smoking and self-esteem programs in schools, using group and peer counselling models (Neville et al 1994:86).

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[6] This is the first comprehensive survey of student drug use in the province. It is part of a larger project in Atlantic Canada which will compare results by province and examine trends over time. The 1996 results were compared with similar studies in Ontario and B.C. A follow-up survey is planned for 1998 (Spurrell 1996). Another study in 1998, based at Memorial University, is a path analytic survey to identify potential causal factors such as parental behaviour.

Sexuality

Newfoundland and Labrador teenagers become sexually active at an earlier age than Canadians as a whole (Neville et al 1994:78). The *Student Drug Use Survey* found that about one-third of all the students, and two-thirds of the Grade Twelve students, were sexually active. Less than half of the sexually active students reported using condoms regularly. The study noted that sexual activity is increasing among younger students. In this age group, a correlation was found between unplanned sex and the use of drugs or alcohol, suggesting the need for better education in this area (Spurrell 1996:14-16).

In the late 1980s, the province's teenage birth rate was 25.8 per 1,000, the second highest in the country and at least 50 percent higher than the Canadian average (Lacey 1992:3-4). However, the provincial average is skewed by very high rates in two regions, which may reflect differences in access to abortion. Teenage mothers are likely to be early school leavers. One study (Sharpe and Spain 1990) indicated that 16 percent of high school dropouts left because of pregnancy. A study of teenage mothers (Lacey 1992) found that most got support from family, partners or friends, and sometimes from teachers and public health nurses. They relied mainly on their parents for child care. Young mothers who were not living at home were less likely to be back in school and more lik ly to have low incomes. About half of the mothers felt that birth control should be more accessible and that there should be more pre-natal classes and parenting groups.

A number of schools have parenting programs and child care centres for student parents. The provincial health status report called for more sex education in schools; prevention programs for sexually transmitted diseases; greater access to birth control in school and recreational settings; peer counselling and self-esteem programs to prevent STDs and unwanted pregnancies (Neville et al 1994:86). A new sex education curriculum is being introduced into the schools.

1.5 Health and Social Services

Mental Health Services

Newfoundland and Labrador has a high ratio of population to health care providers. The ratio is higher outside of St. John's (Neville et al 1994:62). There is a province-wide shortage of mental health professionals specializing in children and youth (Newfoundland and Labrador 1996:113). Needs assessments have pointed to the scarcity of services for adolescents, not just those with serious mental illnesses, but also those who are going through temporary crises. More crisis intervention is needed to prevent problems from becoming chronic and lasting into adulthood (Elgar 1995:53; personal communication with mental health professionals). In the surveys done by the Community Mental Health Initiative in Western Newfoundland, students called for services such as individual counselling and a crisis telephone line, and more access to

guidance counsellors (CMHI 1995).

Health care providers report that too many young people, especially in rural areas, have had to go through the "referral mill," moving from one kind of service to another, enduring multiple assessments and long delays for counselling. Most mental health services have long waiting lists for crisis counselling as well as for treatment of mental illness. There is also not enough support and co-ordination of services for young offenders who need counselling in anger management, substance abuse, mental illness and other problems (Canning 1996: 235).

In many rural communities, guidance counsellors and educational psychologists double as mental health professionals, and often they are the only professionals available in a community for children and youth in crisis (Canning 1996:234-254; Social Policy 1997a:47-49).[7] In addition to personal counselling, they may do extra things such as arranging for emergency food and clothing or accompanying young offenders to court. Many do not have time to do preventive work in the schools, such as group counselling in emotional and self-esteem problems. Educational psychologists spend much of their time assessing students and referring them to services, but often they cannot follow up on them afterwards (Canning 1996:251-254; personal communication with school officials).

Regional community health boards are re-orienting their services and creating new ones to deal with a crisis of unmet needs for children and adolescents. Some are creating multi-disciplinary teams of psychologists, social workers, educational psychologists and others. Some of these teams deal exclusively with children and youth (See Section 2). In surveys and focus groups, youth have said they would like to see multi-purpose centres that would have recreation, clubs and other activities in the same building with counselling addictions, STD/birth control and mental health. The multi-service model gives access to a range of services and reduces the likelihood of stigma. Many people involved in health care and recreation would like to set up multi-service centres.

Addictions Services

Addictions Services, located with the regional community health boards, are revising their prevention programs, using the results of the *Student Drug Use Survey* and their own needs assessments. The prevention programs in schools and communities emphasize peer education and mentoring, parent workshops and multi-issue collaboration. There is a de-emphasis on the "abstinence versus abuse" message in favour of harm reduction approaches. Recognizing that youth will experiment, the goal is to offer ways to keep experimentation from becoming abuse.

The number of adolescent referrals is increasing, and treatment programs are trying new

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7 There are fewer educational psychologists than guidance counsellors. The ratio is one educational psychologist for every 3,000 students.

approaches to respond to the problem. For example, the St. John's office found that individual and group counselling sessions were not keeping participants long enough to make a difference, so they began offering one-day programs which were more effective in getting youth to go on to individual treatment. Given that many teens are turning to Alcoholics Anonymous, they worked with AA to set up a teen group in St. John's. They have also set up family support groups to make addictions treatment more effective.

In light of the need for more outpatient and day patient treatment for youth, Mental Health and Addictions Services in some regions are trying to create joint services. The effort includes school and justice officials, social workers and youth and parent organizations. The focus is on how to consolidate services and reduce duplication, in order to reach more young people in need. Health professionals are also seeing an increase in the number of youth with serious addiction problems who have to leave the province for inpatient care. There is a movement to set up a youth addictions inpatient centre in the province (personal communication with health professionals)

Addictions Services offices sponsor Allied Youth posts in each region. There are 25 posts with a total of 1,200 young people, who get involved in community service work, leadership training, annual conferences and camps. The Allied Youth brief to the Select Committee on Children's Interests (1995) called for a greater role for youth in decision-making, more support for youth forums and organizations and a central clearinghouse to give young people better access to information.

Child Welfare Services

A 1992 evaluation of the Child Welfare Division noted that the Division's budget had not kept pace with a rapid increase in child protection referrals. They needed more staff, treatment services and preventive services. Social worker caseloads were at least twice as large as the national standard. Children and families were experiencing a high turnover of social workers, and there were not enough services to support children to stay in their families, despite a policy to reduce the number of children coming into care (Child Welfare 1992:8-18). The Department developed a strategic plan which included more social workers, family supports and counselling for children in care (Newfoundland and Labrador 1993). However, many of the problems in the system have persisted, according to the Select Committee on Children's Interests and the provincial Youth In Care Network.

There has been a serious gap in services to youth between 16 and 18 years old, who are too old to be under Child Protection legislation but too young for adult services. The government is planning to include them under Child Protection in the near future. Currently, however, those who cannot stay in their homes are ineligible for foster care. Group homes are not suitable for all of them, and there are few alternatives except friends or the streets. Some need counselling and other kinds of intervention. A small number are getting involved in prostitution in order to

obtain money and shelter. There is a temporary shelter in St. John's for females in this age group but not for males (Newfoundland House of Assembly 1996:87-102; personal communication with Youth In Care Network and mental health professionals).

New Service Delivery Models

The Select Committee on Children's Interests reported in 1996 that programs for helping children and youth in need were fragmented, rigid, top-down and crisis-oriented rather than pro-active. The Committee urged government to replace its hierarchical structure with one that involved communities, parents, children and youth as partners (Newfoundland and Labrador 1996:37-75).

A trend towards a more holistic approach to health and social services began with the move of community health services from the provincial department to regional boards. Recently, child protection, youth diversion and family and rehabilitation services have been moved from provincial departments to these regional boards. The government is introducing a model for co-ordination of services in education, justice, social welfare and health. A task force in each region is charged with re-organizing services and finding ways to collaborate with families and community organizations. The integrated services model is supposed to include better co-ordination of services to children and youth, through "individual support services plans" created by interdisciplinary teams of professionals and family members.

Integrated services models may not be relevant in communities that have lost social workers or never had them, or that are too far from community health offices for co-ordination to be effective. The school guidance counsellor may be the only professional available to co-ordinate mental health and social welfare support. The model will not make much difference in these communities, without more resources being put into field staff for each regional health and community services board.

The provincial government has announced a plan to create six regional youth networks in partnership with youth, youth-serving agencies and communities. The networks will be access points for prevention and early intervention, with peer counselling, self-help groups, mental health services, back to school initiatives and employment enhancement. There will be a focus on youth at risk. Where possible, the networks will use existing sites and organizations, such as schools or recreation programs. They will be community-based and designed to build on what youth-serving agencies, youth organizations and community organizations are already doing in each region. The networks are to be set up late in 1998, after a consultation process.

1.6 Selected Youth Initiatives

This section looks at some initiatives around the province that are addressing the needs of

youth. These examples highlight the kinds of initiatives that are making a difference in the lives of young people. They involve the development of specific activities in consultation with young people about issues and needs. Some are run by young people, and in others they are part of planning and operations.

Violence Prevention Programs in Schools

School boards are setting up their own violence prevention programs with assistance from the provincial Department of Education and other organizations. Schools in the Corner Brook area are involved in an initiative with Victims Services and a transition house. Junior high school students were sent to a forum for training in violence issues, and they are being used in the schools to educate other students. In Conception Bay South, the school board set up awareness projects with high school classes. For example, math classes compiled statistics on violence, art classes produced murals, and literature classes worked on novels dealing with violence and abuse themes. Older students went into the lower grades and gave presentations, and there were forums on issues such as the links between substance abuse and violence. Bullying and violence, which had been a problem in some schools, declined significantly due to the increased awareness created by the projects.

Vista School Board Youth Forum

In late 1994, the Bonavista-Trinity-Placentia Integrated School Board (now Vista School Board) began hearing reports about the negative effects of the cod moratorium on students, families and communities. Early in 1995, they initiated a three-phase project. In the first phase, they held small group meetings with school staff, students, community agencies and parents from the fishery, to learn more about how the crisis was affecting families. In the second phase, they held a youth forum where students identified issues and worked with school and community representatives to come up with action plans. In the third phase, which is ongoing, they began to implement the action plans.

Students in the forum talked about changes occurring in their families and communities, such as financial crises, an atmosphere of "doom and gloom," and some parents turning to alcohol abuse. Not all of the changes were bad, and many students reported that their families were closer as a result of the crisis. But students indicated an overwhelming need for more support from schools and other agencies to help them find positive ways to deal with this period of transition. The forum came up with action plans, which included: more guidance counselling and other academic support; more career exploration programs with parental involvement; more social and community activities for youth including community use of school facilities; programs such as stress management to support mental health; support for student groups, peer counselling and forums; and increased involvement of youth in community decision-making.

The school board implemented a new career education initiative in the fall of 1996. A major focus was to provide information about what youth could do if they wanted to stay in their communities. Nine career clusters were identified, including mining and offshore oil, new

fisheries, aquaculture and information technology. People from each sector, including business people, government representatives and rural development workers, gave presentations to the students. The board also revised its career education curriculum and extended it to the lower grades. Motivational seminars were held to help students get over the "learned hopelessness" pervading communities. Guidance counsellors began to develop stress workshops, and the board is consulting with mental health professionals on other possible measures to take. The work has involved collaboration with parents and students, and partnerships with agencies such as HRDC and the regional community health board.

FINALY (Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth)

FINALY was created to ensure youth participation in the province's 19 regional economic development boards. Youth councils and youth representatives on the boards from each region communicate through a newsletter, e-mail and meetings. FINALY has helped organize youth forums and regional needs assessments, and it has focussed on employment and enterprise opportunities for youth who want to stay in rural areas. In March, 1998, it partnered with some local organizations to hold a province-wide Youth Forum on Education and Economic Development in Grand Falls-Windsor. The forum dealt extensively with the issue of high tuition costs and ways to advocate for fee reductions. The forum also looked at development models in Iceland and Ireland, and the links between accessible education and economic development. Literacy and the quality of rural education were also discussed. FINALY is working on a strategic plan, and it is broadening its mandate to include social and educational issues.

Brother T.I. Murphy Learning Resource Centre

This alternative learning centre offers Adult Basic Education, high school courses, life skills programs and career planning for youth and adults who have been unsuccessful in the regular school system. It sponsors government programs such as the Youth Internship Program, a schooling and work experience program for youth aged 15-24, and the Employment Action Program for adults and youth on social assistance. Recently, the Centre created a supportive employment program for those aged 18-24, which is individually tailored to meet the education, training or work experience needs of participants. Although the average age at the centre is 20, the mix of youth and adults has turned out to be beneficial for both groups. The Centre was delivering health programs such as smoking cessation, but these were found to be ineffective in the long run. A holistic health program is being developed instead, which emphasizes self-esteem and the physical, emotional and mental aspects of self and lifestyle. The Centre is also working on re-organizing the curriculum to meet students' needs.

Pathfinder Learning Centre

The Centre was created through a partnership of the Stephenville-Port aux Basques School Board and community organizations. It offers Adult Basic Education and high school courses for youth and adults in a flexible and supportive learning environment. The Centre sponsors the Youth Internship Program with education and work experience for youth 15-24. It has a co-operative education program with opportunities to explore careers that are feasible in the local area, such as tourism, aquaculture, agrifoods and information technology. Recently, an

alternative school was set up in the Centre, for youth aged 12-16 who cannot function in the traditional school environment.

Boys and Girls Clubs

The Boys and Girls Clubs operate structured daily programs in recreation, tutoring and counselling for young people between five and 18 years old. There are ten sites around the province (three in St. John's) serving over 4,000 kids. The clubs are open to everyone, but they focus on disadvantaged or at-risk children. They are doing more counselling in anger management, self-esteem and other issues, in response to an increase in children with problems at home. They are also trying to accommodate an increase in the number of older teens who want to stay on. Leadership training has been expanded, including one program that gives low-income teens some work experience and the opportunity to earn a community recreation certificate. Recently, they began to focus on the needs of young teenage girls, who often drop out due to self-esteem problems and sensitivity to intimidation by boys. Anti-harassment policies were tightened up. Clubs consulted the girls about what they wanted and were told, "time without the boys." A program is being developed for girls which will include sports and wilderness trips. Cutbacks in government funding have made it hard to help other communities that want to set up clubs. An instructional video is being prepared, and groups are being encouraged to start with something small and work up from there.

Bright Sights Youth Committee

Burgeo is a deepsea fishing community on the South Coast of Newfoundland heavily affected by fishery closures. In 1996, a group of youth approached the RCMP with their concerns about weekend drinking. Linking the problem to lack of alternative activities, the youth and police surveyed elementary and high school students and found that there was a lot of support for the idea of a youth recreation centre. The Bright Sights Youth Committee was formed at a public meeting, with eight youth members and four adult resource people. The Committee travelled to Marystown and Grand Bank to observe school-community recreation programs in those communities. They decided to adopt a similar model in Burgeo. The school became an official partner, offering rent-free space and facilities. After months of planning and organizing, a weekend youth club was set up, run by 90 volunteers and serving two different age groups at different times. The club offers sports, games and other activities, and there are plans to set up peer tutoring and computer stations. The Committee started a recycling program to raise funds, and it is trying to get corporate and government support.

Mount Pearl Mentors

The Mount Pearl Mentors was set up in 1996 by the Mount Pearl Community Based Policing Advisory Committee with funding from Youth Service Canada, in order to provide young people, especially those at risk, with positive leisure activities and role models in the community. Fifteen young people were hired to operate sports programs, do a needs assessment and develop new programs. Their surveys of youth, adults and local businesses identified five areas of concern: drugs and alcohol; career and education; lack of programs and services; lack of youth involvement in programs; and relationships, sex and sexuality. The group realized that it

needed to provide more non-sport activities, female-centred programming, career and tutoring programs, drug awareness programs and education about relationships and sexuality. They developed a specific plan for each of these areas and worked on a public awareness strategy.

Community Mental Health Initiative (Health and Community Services, Western Region)

The CMHI, consisting of service providers and community representatives in the Corner Brook-Bay of Islands area, was concerned about the scarcity of services and the long waiting lists for children with mental health problems. They conducted needs assessments and planning sessions, and proposed a community resource centre model with several agencies contributing support. The mental health centre, which is part of Health and Community Services, uses a single-entry, team approach involving school psychologists, community health professionals, social workers and others. Students can be referred quickly from schools for individual and group counselling.

A sub-group of CMHI conducted surveys of youth in the area and found that 30 percent were experiencing good mental health only "sometimes," or even less often. Stress and "the blues" were linked to lack of activities, substance abuse and lack of opportunities for counselling. The group began to advocate for more youth-centred community and recreation activities. They also saw these as a means of creating much-needed jobs for young people in the area.

Youth In Care Network of Newfoundland and Labrador

A provincial branch of the national Network was formed in 1996 for youth who are, or have been, in the care of the child welfare system. The purpose is to act as a voice for youth who feel they do not have enough say in their own case plans, and to work for reforms in the child welfare system. There are about 700 youth in care in the province. The board consists of 12 members, mostly youth, with a lawyer, social worker and community health worker. The first tasks have been to identify specific issues and form a province-wide support and advocacy network. A field worker has been travelling around the province holding sharing circles with youth in each region. The day after each sharing circle, the field worker meets with social workers in the area to discuss issues raised by the group. Some of the youth in these circles have become involved in the organization, while others simply like the opportunity to correspond with someone in the Network.

The Network is highlighting some of the issues which have come out of sharing circles. These include frequent turnover of social workers, changes from one home to another, unequal treatment in some homes and lack of confidentiality. Another concern is the situation of youth reaching 16 or 17, who choose to leave foster care but must do so with no support to make the transition. A widespread uncertainty about rights has prompted the Network to begin work on a pamphlet informing youth of their rights in foster care and the child welfare system.

1.7 Summary

Newfoundland and Labrador has been characterized by low average family incomes, high rates of family and child poverty, low wages and welfare payments and high unemployment. Many families have had little in the way of a financial cushion to fall back on in hard times. Literacy and education levels have been below national standards, although there have been recent improvements. Outmigration has been high, and dominated by the best educated. However, despite the negative statistics, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have reported low stress levels in national surveys, suggesting that quality of life, and strong family and community ties, have been important determinants of health.

The 1990s have been a period of crisis and change for rural families. Beginning in 1992, fishery closures threw more than 30,000 people in the province out of work. Many of them are still dependent on income support. Cutbacks in government spending on education, health and social welfare have diminished the capacity to respond to crisis. Increasing social differentiation, and greater competition for available jobs and resources, are threats to community solidarity in rural areas.

Economic and social conditions are creating uncertainty and anxiety among youth, at a time in their lives which is already full of personal changes. Schools have experienced cutbacks, low-achieving students are still falling through the cracks, and rural schools are struggling to help students compete with their urban counterparts. School staff, already stretched to the limit, must deal with increasing social, financial and personal problems among students. Although more young people are graduating from high school, they face a tight job market, high tuition fees and the prospect of moving away permanently. Most rural youth no longer have the option of working in the fishery, and they must build a sense of identity and a future away from that industry. There are not enough opportunities for organized recreation and other activities. Many young people feel that they do not have a voice in their communities. Substance abuse is linked by youth themselves to a lack of meaningful alternatives.

Although rural youth have previously scored low on surveys of stress and depressive symptoms, there are signs that this may be changing for the worse. Youth from families affected by the moratorium have had to deal with increased family stress due to loss of income and livelihood. For many, the moratorium has brought families closer together and has not caused lasting distress. But for those adolescents who are experiencing problems, there are not enough counselling and treatment services in rural or urban areas. Some multi-service centres are being set up, but without more resources in the field they cannot meet the needs of rural young people.

> Our environment, personal life, and economic conditions play a big factor in the health of young people. There are many influences surrounding us that can cause us stress, depression, and other illnesses. There are programs available for youth but because of lack of government funding these programs are being cut or are not available to those living in rural areas.

(Tina Pittman, Youth in Care Network)

Our description of youth initiatives suggests factors that are important for improving programs and services. Not all the examples are rural, but all of them deal with issues relevant to rural youth. Many of the initiatives are multi-faceted, such as addressing substance abuse with positive alternatives, or linking economic development with access to education and concrete opportunities. The alternative schools have combined flexible curriculum with job and career training and holistic life skills programs. School and recreation programs have provided counselling, work experience and a role for youth in community action and social issues. Some programs have introduced gender-sensitive activities.

In these examples, the groups are responding to specific needs expressed by young people. Some have been started by youth themselves, with support from agencies and others in the community. Some involve institutions such as schools and health centres going beyond traditional areas of responsibility, using innovative approaches, and working with youth, communities and other agencies to get things done. They all deal with aspects of the determinants of health, giving young people opportunities to find new relationships and activities, to work on self-esteem and coping skills, to chart an economic future and have a voice in their communities.

2.0 YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

The second phase of the project was to hear young people themselves speak about the conditions affecting their lives and what needs to change. Seven focus groups were held around the province, organized and facilitated by young people from FINALY and the Youth in Care Network. A discussion outline was prepared with help from the facilitators. Participants talked about their communities, education and employment, social issues and their feelings about the future. They had many suggestions for changes that would improve the situation for youth.

2.1 Communities

When asked about life in their communities, the participants talked about feeling safe, being able to walk home late at night without worrying, having a freedom that does not exist in big cities. Some suggested friendliness, closeness, mutual trust, people taking care of others in emergencies, working together to get things done, organizing sports and teen dances. Not everyone saw these advantages. One group talked about lack of trust among the adults in their community, which affects the youth. Small towns can be "lonely" places, and there is pressure to be like everyone else.

> *I moved here and it was totally laid back and people are leaving their doors unlocked, so I got into that lifestyle, but I'd be a lot more tough if I had grown up somewhere other than here.*

> *[In a city], you say "hi," and they turn around and look at you like you're crazy....I was walking down the street and waving to people, and my friend said, "Don't go talking to them, they might turn around and have a smack at you or something."*

> *If you're something that's not normal out there, it's crazy. Don't mention it, don't look like it, be as normal as possible.*

Even those who had good things to say about their communities called them "boring," with "not enough to do," and "not much to offer youth." This was due to a lack recreation facilities and centres, and lack of opportunities to participate in things. Some of them had access to pools, arenas and other facilities, but they felt that a teen centre was needed.

> *We don't have a place to hang out. We used to have the pool hall. It used to be boring down there sometimes, but at least it was a place to go and get out of your house.*

> *They feel that even a gym would give them something to do; as it is right now they*

just hang around on the roads.

There was a big softball tournament this weekend. But that was only one weekend. There really is nothing to do.

There is lack of funding for sports facilities such as gyms and equipment.

If you are not sports-oriented, you have absolutely nothing to do.

The groups also noted that teen dances and hangouts have to deal with substance abuse. Some people do not go to dances because of smoking and drinking, but too many would stay away if there were a complete ban. A pool hall had shut down because a few were doing drugs; the manager of a dance hall had threatened to end teen dances because of drinking and fighting.

We have to pay for other people's actions because "whoever" made it bad for other people to have fun.

It's not just the teenagers, it's adults, too....They only focus on the teenagers. But it's a learned behaviour.

There's a committee that's trying to form a social club, but we're not really sure what to call it, because if we call it just a regular hangout place, then you're going to get people turning up Friday nights who are drunk and smoking or whatever, and we haven't found the right balance, what exactly we can do to avoid it.

If they had fun things like field trips, hanging out, barbecues, and if this got around how much fun they were having, the smokers and dopers and drinkers are going to slack off that and try to get involved....This is where positive peer pressure comes in.

A lot of them felt that there is too much drinking because youth have nothing else to do, or think they don't. Some said that a drinking culture among adults in their community is a big factor in abuse of alcohol by youth. Some felt that kids are getting into drinking and smoking at an earlier age.

If you're not comfortable with that, you got nothing else to do.

You go up alongside the road...that's where the young people hung out—get drunk, have a draw, have sex, get pregnant.

Their parents, aunts, uncles and the rest of their family as well, everything they do is centred around alcohol.

There was a feeling that many adults in the community do not respect youth and tend to stereotype them. If something happens, a young person is automatically accused; when some are troublemakers, everyone gets blamed. They described being watched by police, followed around by store clerks, kicked out of malls and stores even when they have money and want to buy something. Some felt that they are not heard, not given credit and not taken seriously. However, they appreciated the adults who respect and support youth, who do not stereotype, who listen and give them a chance to prove themselves. Some thought that in their community there is more adult support than in other places. For others, the adults in their community are not involved in things in general, which makes it harder on youth.

A lot of people are bored and feel that nobody cares about them.

We don't have discussions like this in schools.

All decisions for young people are made by adults. Young people are not asked.

There's no youth getting involved in the development association, the development corporation and the town council....Youth might be intimidated because they got all those people that seem to know what they're doing.

When asked about family life, some felt that families are closer and spend more time together in small communities. Others had parents whose work keeps them away from home a lot. There was talk of parents who do not provide direction or are abusive. Some felt that violence in kids comes from violence and lack of support at home. Others argued that violence is everywhere, and parents cannot protect you from it. Parents can be over-protective, alienating their children. Sometimes there is too much of "you shouldn't be doing that," and not enough information about how to protect yourself.

The youth around here have never had much direction. There are a lot of kids here raising themselves.

A lot of parents I know are majorly overprotective with their kids being home at a certain time, watching certain TV shows.

You come to school, your parents think, "Oh, they're fine, they're with their friends...." But they could come home black and blue. There are students who come to school and they're getting pushed around, getting pressured.

A parent should be a friend, but a teacher as well, be nice to you, be one of your good friends, as well as a person who tells you right from wrong.

The groups talked about being treated differently because of gender or sexual orientation. Being gay in a rural community means fear of exposure and pressure to be like everyone else.

Some girls were told they could not participate in certain sports leagues, and found it hard to raise funds for girls' sports. There were stories of females not being hired for physical labour jobs, and males being suspected of crimes more than females.

> *I find that "you're a girl" type thing still lingers in the air here. Society hasn't come up to speed with that.*
>
> *It's not too bad for sports. It used to be worse. Girls couldn't [participate]. Now it's cool to be in sports.*
>
> *If a female has sex often she is a slut or a tramp. If a male has sex often he is a stud.*
>
> *There was this young fellow I went to school with, and he was called everything in the book....he was just a little bit feminine.*

There were comments about medical and other services in communities. Some talked about lack of support for pregnant teenagers, lack of access to health care for sexually active females and a shortage of doctors in general. Others described having to wait days to see guidance counsellors. There were some positive comments about police and social workers coming into schools to talk about abuse and alcohol and drug use. In one case, a man talked to the class about his own experience growing up with abuse, which helped one participant deal with it personally. When asked who they go to for support with problems, most indicated friends and family first.

> *Being here we don't have a gynecologist and you have to travel a long ways to see one, and when young girls are having sex, once you have sex you're supposed to have regular pap smears, and that's kind of hard when you have to travel 250 km just to get to her.*
>
> *Family counselling, psychiatric help, almost every person in this community could use it....Counselling is not there, out around the bay. There's no services available.*
>
> *A lot of the time people won't go to the guidance counsellor if they got problems anyway, because their parents are saying, "Oh, don't go saying what's happening at home, keep it to yourself, keep it in the family."*
>
> *In school, when somebody sees you going in to the counsellor, it's, "What's the matter with them?" You don't want everyone to know your business.*

2.2 Education and Work

There were concerns about the quality of education in high schools: declining enrolments, teacher lay-offs, larger class sizes and fewer course options. They worried that teachers will have less time to help students and to run extra-curricular activities. One student had been part of a successful demonstration to keep recreation programs in the school. They also talked about academic pressures, the need to make good marks and be computer literate.

> *...in order to get into [computer graphics] courses, we need to have...sciences and chemistry so that the college will know that we tried hard and we succeeded at it.*

> *...the pressure is going to be on us to work—how are we supposed to get things done, because every time we turn around they're always changing stuff or they're dropping this or that course.*

> *...the academic pressure being put on people right now is really high. We're expected to excel in school yet if you don't understand, with all the education cutbacks right now they're going to be putting more students into the classroom and the teacher won't have time to go to each person.*

> *If you drop out it costs so much money to go back and get your GED. I had to know exactly what I wanted to do before I finished....you have to do the right courses, otherwise you have to come back and do them all over again.*

Several said that anxiety about college and careers begins in Grade Nine. You start to worry about what courses you need for a career, but you may not know what you want to do. Some described their experiences with co-op education and career awareness sessions, and a regional employment office that gave presentations in schools and helped students with resumes afterwards. Several said there was not enough career training and access to guidance counsellors in the schools.

There was much discussion about rising tuition fees. They knew that people used to be able to get bursaries and government aid. Now, "education is for the rich"; student loans are "one of the most horrible things that was ever invented"; "education is all about money." The provincial program that allows students to work for a tuition grant was described as "very competitive" in some areas, where there were not enough positions and employers. But in another area, there were "lots of grants this year." One participant thought there were two hard choices open to youth in the 1990s: you could try to survive without an education, probably leaving the province to find work, or you could struggle to find the money, and go into debt.

> *They took away all the grants, even for needy people. There's lots of intelligent people in this harbour....I didn't go to university because I couldn't afford it.*

> *My parents never in a million years could afford to send me to university. You just have to do it on your own.*

We have to apply for every scholarship to try and get every cent we can get because we got to have it.

It seems nobody cares about young people any more. Look at school and tuition. They keep telling you in high school, "you got to get an education," and then half the kids that graduate from high school can't go to school....If they are able to get the money they are in debt forever....

All those courses and private colleges when the cod moratorium came in....Highest kind of tuition because the government was paying for it....And if I went to get into a program, all the seats are taken.

They observed that there is not enough work for university graduates, except for those taking information technology and technical programs. They thought that graduates will not have many opportunities to start a career in rural areas and will have to live in towns and cities. Some of them knew that there programs to help with self-employment, "you just have to look for them." They also talked about their experience in the workforce so far. Some said it is getting harder for high school students to get part-time jobs in rural areas. There is more competition with post-secondary students, and employment often depends on who you know and who your family is. You are told you need experience, you get laid off frequently and you are judged by the length of your hair and what you are wearing.

When I work—you're kind of expected not to dress this way, and that's okay. But it's just an outlet for my self-expression, which if we were all clones the world would be real boring.

They just look at you and say you're not qualified, they won't even ask what you think you can do.

I don't like my work at all. I make $10 an hour and if I quit, I'd make $5.25 an hour so I can't afford to quit. I got to stay in this job because I wouldn't find another one.

There are 15 science majors from the university walking around this town right now, who don't have a job, or are working at McDonald's or places like that, with a science degree from the university.

It's hard to save money for school when you're making $5.25 an hour living on your own. And if you're out around the bay, you can't make $5.25 an hour and live with your parents, because there's nothing out there to make $5.25 an hour from.

2.3 Past, Present and Future

The groups were asked how their lives were different from when their parents were young. They described parents growing up in bigger families and having children at a young age: "They grew up faster." Some did not think they would have children until they were much older, for financial reasons. They thought that in their parents' day, children were watched over more, and females stayed home and did not have as many rights. There was little access to birth control or information about sexuality.

> *We are a lot more open with things, if something is wrong with our life, like issues with sexuality and stuff like that, but back then, sexuality, with the Catholic religion—"No! Don't say that bad word," type of thing.*

> *There were two females in his family and both of them have university degrees....The males were supposed to go off and get work as opposed to the females who went off to further their studies.*

> *When [my mom] was 17 she became a housewife with kids and a husband. I'm now 19 and I'm going to university, which she never had the opportunity to do....Everything has changed so much over the past 20 years that my mother wishes she could be like me now, although all along I wished I could be like her, because she had the '60s.*

They thought that in the past, it was more acceptable to leave school to go to work. Fishing was always a back-up, and if people did get a degree or a trade, they were guaranteed a job and tended to stay in one career. Their parents did not worry as much about the future and had simpler choices to make about life. Today, they said, there is no back-up in the fishery, and there are more expectations. You have to make something of yourself and stay in school to get anywhere. Jobs are fewer, wages are lower, and you may have several career changes. However, it is "a lot more liberal now" in terms of job opportunities for women. There is more technology and information now than their parents could have dreamed of.

> *Back in our parents' day I guess you knew what you were going to do, your future was almost pre-determined. Now nothing is solid, you can't rely on anything. It's like a mental block to the future.*

> *When my parents came out of school, even if they quit, they would go right on to a workplace and get the biggest kind of a job, without a trade or an education. But these days, the first thing you need is a profession, you got to be trained in something, and it's going to cost you a mint in student loans.*

> *It was a family business....If you were born in a family where your dad was a fisherman and you were a male, a female in some cases, you were going into the*

boat.

When asked they would be in five years, they answered, "not in the province," "still in school," "elsewhere looking for work," "homesick." They did not see many options for youth who want to stay or to return. "If you are not into computers you will have to leave." But a few were hopeful that new opportunities will open up soon in rural areas. Some did not want children because they felt pessimistic about the future. Some thought that even if there is more technology, young people in the future may have to work harder, there may be fewer jobs and education will be costly. One participant worried about the future of foster children if there are more program cuts.

My goal in 5 years is not to be happy, it's to be financially stable and have lots of money. That's what is so ridiculous. That's what society is about. Everything is money.

Any youth that has any potential are leaving, they're not staying here, because there's nothing here.

To be a youth in 1998 is hope for other generations to come. We have to set a path for other generations. Whatever we do will reflect on generations to come.

You can forget your children being anywhere close to here, if things keep going the way they are.

2.4 Economic Change

Some of the focus groups were held in communities affected by the moratorium; others had a few participants from fishery-dependent communities. Some of the youth had no personal experience of the moratorium, but they had gone through lay-offs in other industries. There were some lively discussions about the value of the TAGS adjustment program. Some said that it has taken away the work ethic, encouraging formerly enterprising people to depend on government support. There was a suggestion that the program is creating a group of dependent youth as well. Some thought that many people on TAGS have lots of money, and that wealthy fishermen are collecting payments. Others argued that it was hard for people who had worked so many years in the fishery to adjust, and that TAGS had trained people for jobs that are not there.

Fishermen knew what work was, more than probably 95 percent of the population. They work hard. Ever since this came in, they put themselves in the exact same category as welfare recipients.

My father got laid off two years ago. He was promised a seasonal job. The government never gave out seasonal jobs, so he was out on his own. No program

was offered to him.

I grew up in a fishing community and my dad is a fisherman and he's fished almost all his life....It's probably going to affect him a lot because he is taking care of my little sister as well. And there's nothing to do in the community but go away.....Some people will leave but most of them will stay there.

There was talk of some families having less money, and of students coming to school without the right clothing. Parents get stressed, "and the kids are stressed because they don't know how to react around their parents. They get in school and they're not able to concentrate." When parents cannot pay for university, the youth leave the province "to wash dishes." Parents cannot pass on a livelihood to their children.

The parents are trying to teach their kids how to fish, and they might not have the opportunity. When they were young, their fathers passed on the fishery to them, and they're still trying to pass it on to their kids, but they can't.

You'd always see young fellows working at the fish plant and now it's stopped. Leaves a lot of people without a job.

They'll have to go on welfare....There's people on TAGS supporting the grocery stores and the gas stations. It's going to hurt everything.

You're going to see crime, mental illnesses, depressions, suicide attempts....You saw all that when the fishery first closed and when the mine closed.

The groups talked about the future of rural communities and the province's economy. They imagined "ghost towns," and "beautiful retirement places." As people leave, communities will not be able to afford services. Some thought their communities have potential in tourism and new industries, which would employ more people. Some felt that the government was doing too much with mega-projects like Hibernia that "don't affect us." There were stories of people who had been hired and laid off, or who had come back to work on a project that fell through. There was the perception that mega-projects hire people with degrees and experience that locals do not have the opportunity to gain. Some felt that diversification in the fishery and other local resources will work better than retraining people for something entirely different. Aquaculture, sea urchins and new-species forestry were examples. There was concern about continued overfishing and depletion of resources.

2.5 What Needs to be Done

Questions were asked about what is discouraging and encouraging for youth, what things need to change and what adults and youth can do to make changes. Some of the answers are

reproduced below.

What is Discouraging:

- stereotyping; lack of appreciation for your work; not taken seriously; adults not following through; being let down by everyone around you

- ideas shot down -- "there's no money for that"; not a lot of opportunities; few jobs; low wages; hiring youth from away instead of locals

- people not staying; friends and family leaving; families in poverty; seeing what others have

- lack of confidence; negative attitudes

The government says you got to get your education, it's the most important thing, and when you try to do it, they say you can't afford it....They make it as hard as possible.

I've had people tell me that I'm never going to be able to do anything because I have a child. That's not going to stop me. That will only make me leave because I've got to look after her now.

They think there's nothing out there for them, they're not going anywhere, the government and corporations don't care—why would you bother in a place where people don't care?

What is Encouraging:

- getting an education; new opportunities and interests; getting involved; independence

- friends; having a good time

- support from family and friends; a good community where a child is supposed to do great things; parents that help out in sports and school; adults that respect you and don't stereotype; being trusted

- youth forums where adults and the media listen; people in the business community that try to help

- believing in yourself so others will

What encourages youth is the fact they know they're good enough to survive....If

they have no self-esteem then they'll feel like they're not worthy.

From the time you were babies, you were told you should do something. A lot of kids around here don't have that.

What is Needed:

- business and community support; co-op programs and employers working on new ideas with students; a lobbyist or advocate with influence and experience
- information about job opportunities; support for self-employment; success stories from elsewhere
- programs to help students get an education, like bursaries and grants
- more guidance counsellors
- youth councils and centres; information on how to start them and where to get help; teen centres with pool tables, computer and game rooms, places to talk, sports
- youth forums with adults hearing about the issues; better communication between adults and youth
- accessible information about child abuse that describes your rights and what to do; young people visiting schools to talk about abuse

There should be more information out there for abused children that is easy to get at—that you don't have to go to an adult and talk to them about it. Just so you could get the information and decide. A pamphlet or something.

We already have a committee of youth that's trying to get a youth centre on the go. But we have no idea how to go about it, where to get the money, how to do it, where to have it, what to do, nothing!

There should be more workshops on how to present a problem, and how to go about it so you don't look like an imbecile.

Wouldn't it be helpful to have someone 22 years old on our council?...There should be a youth representative on everything.

In Grand Bank, the youth centre is run by youth. They have two adult members on their council instead of having an adult council with two youth members.

What are they doing for people in poverty who cannot afford to send their children to school?

Free education. Everybody deserves an education, if you want to go to university and get a career that's going to help your country.

What Adults Can Do:

- an attitude change has to come before anything will work; give us a chance to show that not all youth are bad
- without help from adults no youth can try things; adults need to support youth taking business risks
- get together with youth and build youth centres; parents and police can start activities with youth in trouble, as their friends
- more parents can get involved with school activities

When we had our walk-out, a lot of parents showed their support by bringing us food and tarps and blankets. The parents really don't understand how much their support meant to us.

It shouldn't just be your mom and dad, it should be your aunts, and your teachers, everybody in the community should be telling you that you should be the best that you can be.

I'm on the RCMP youth advisory council, and they're trying to do something in our town from a youth perspective to make it better.

What Youth Can Do:

- have more respect for parents; understand the pressures they are under; find new ways for parents to listen; talk to parents
- make jobs for ourselves; take the initiative; tap into what is available without waiting for adults to show you; come back to communities with experience and education
- get involved in youth programs; design the programs; get involved in decision-making; get involved in youth organizations, student politics
- speak out more; make views clearer; make substantial statements and demands; pressure the government to get things started; do not give up because some adults will not listen

- at schools, organize things for students to express their views: forums, writing assignments, research papers, sketches, cartoons, plays, projects, articles, posters, internet
- older students can go to schools and talk to younger ones; youth will listen to youth
- organize community clean-ups, forums, demonstrations, posters, media campaigns, surveys

Reaching out to the kids where they can still be influenced, and make them see that it is good around here and we are the ones that have to make things change.

When I get my degree I'm going to start my own youth group home, which will house young offenders between the ages of 12 to 17 so that they don't have to go to the big cities.

...we've been abused a lot when we were younger, we could organize a meeting, a rally for kids and invite people to come in and listen....and voice what happened to us as children and why we should stop it and not let it happen.

Join the youth of the province together...have a union. All the voices of the youth, if they got together and screamed at the same time, they might be heard.

...making sure our voice is heard and our opinions are valued, and give more respect and hope our kids will have the same respect for us.

I think that young people are going somewhere in this province in terms of doing something about the issues.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescence can be a time of turmoil in the best of circumstances. For youth in Newfoundland and Labrador, it has been more challenging because of difficult economic times. Massive lay-offs in the fishery have coincided with reduced spending on education, health and social services. The impact on rural families been great, because many live close to the margin and are part of a rural economy that is only slowly diversifying. With the end of TAGS approaching, many rural communities will see more outmigration, more families going on welfare and less money for infrastructure and services.

Young people are facing stressful situations created by unemployment, declining resources in schools, high tuition fees and inadequate health and social services. For many youth raised in fishing families, the fishery is no longer an option and their parents cannot be role models for work. Young people feel pressure to decide on careers, achieve academically and succeed in a competitive job market. Financial barriers to post-secondary education are creating anxiety and pessimism. Almost every day, rural youth are bombarded with the message that the "best" young people are leaving their communities. Those who want to stay need encouragement and ways to participate.

One of the ways this is happening is through FINALY, which has organized youth needs assessments and forums and is getting youth involved in regional economic development. FINALY is looking at community development models which involve youth in community action, recreation, enterprises and networks. It is also beginning to speak out on issues such as access to higher education. The Youth in Care Network is another youth-driven group that is beginning to advocate provincially on youth issues, specifically child welfare and the rights of children and youth. Youth in the justice system, including many with mental health problems, need to have a voice as well. In response to the need for more youth-centred activities, some communities have set up recreation programs, created youth committees on community councils and supported programs such as Allied Youth and the Boys and Girls Clubs. But in other communities, people are looking for information about how to get something established. These youth-serving and youth-driven organizations need more support. New structures created by government should build on, and strengthen, existing organizations and networks.

Several years ago, the Canadian Mental Health Association collaborated nationally with the Youth in Care Network to develop a set of goals for youth policy. The "Bridging the Gap" project looked at the needs and priorities of youth and how these can be reflected in services and policies. First and foremost, young people want adults to respect their individuality, their viewpoints and their confidentiality. They need caring relationships with adults, with continuity, support, trust and co-operation. They need to be able to make choices and take responsibility, with access to information that will help them do this. Young people are challenging the hierarchical, controlling approaches of earlier generations. They want adult champions and mentors who will provide information, support and guidance. They also want more opportunities to participate in society through access to education and a more active role in their communities.

Finally, young people want security, not just physical safety and freedom from hunger, poverty and abuse, but also emotional well-being, in environments that are supportive and welcoming. They need more help with problems that are affecting their mental health and their futures.

Recommendations

Participation

(1) More community and school youth forums need to occur around the province, building on ones already held, to identify issues, give youth a voice and act as a bridge between communities.

(2) Young people need more adults to act as mentors and role models. More adults need to get involved in listening to youth and supporting youth-driven activities.

(3) Community development should involve youth directly in planning, action and evaluation. There should be social as well as economic initiatives, in keeping with the principles of the Strategic Social Plan.

(4) More financial support is needed for youth-driven and youth-serving organizations.

Information

(5) Youth need better access to information on the issues that concern them and the resources that exist to support them. They need to be more involved in designing and communicating this information. The proposed Youth Networks should build on existing youth-driven networks.

(7) Research on youth needs to be easily accessible, and more research should be done as a basis for action. The Youth Networks could be responsible for some of this information-gathering.

Education

(8) More resources are needed in the school system to help students realize their potential, including more remedial education, alternative schooling, co-operative education, career programs and guidance counsellors.

(9) Post-secondary education must be made more accessible by reducing tuition fees and providing more scholarships and bursaries.

Mental Health

(10) More mental health services for children and youth are needed in every region of the province, including professional counselling services, peer support programs and personal helping skills programs.

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APPENDIX

(1) Determinants of Health

(2) Focus Group Package

(3) Youth policy goals from Bridging the Gap: Goals for the Development of Youth Policy, CMHA (1992).